

Prairie Chicken Or Eagle?

In his book "The Pursuit of Excellence" Ted W. Engstrom shares the story of a Native American brave who discovers an eagle's egg and hides it in the nest of a prairie chicken. The little eagle eventually was hatched along with the other chicks and grew up assuming it was a prairie chicken. With that assumption in mind, it lived like a prairie chicken. It flew in short bursts with a flurry of feathers and a thrashing of wings-just a few feet off the ground. It's eating habits were those of a Prairie Chicken, not an eagle. It pecked in the dirt for insects and seeds. Years past and the eagle aged, never discovered its true identity and potential.

One day the eagle looked up and saw a magnificent sight: a golden eagle soaring effortlessly in the heavens, taking full advantage of the powerful wind currents. "That's so beautiful," the eagle said to a friend. "What is it?" "Why, that's an eagle," said the knowing friend, "the chief of the birds; but forget it, you could never be like that." The eagle followed his friend's advice, never giving it a second thought. Eventually it died, having lived it's entire life thinking it was a prairie chicken.

Before you read on, sit back a moment and let your emotions talk to you. What are you feeling right now? Be honest with yourself. Consider writing down your thoughts. Then read on.

Now the story is obviously apocryphal, but nonetheless loaded with meaning for us as leaders. As you enter a brand new year, it's a good time to reflect back over the year(s) that have passed and look ahead to the year rolling out before you: a fresh slate, new opportunities to push the envelop a bit, try new things, get out of your comfort zone, be dangerous for Jesus, be more of an eagle and less like a prairie chicken.

Mark Twain: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than the things you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover"

I took on the responsibility for a large conference slated for August of 2006. I didn't have to do it. Nobody was asking or expecting me to do it. It's a risk. It's more that I can reasonably handle. I vacillated between chicken and eagle and decided God wanted me to take the plunge into the deep end of the pool. The potential pay-off is worth the risk and the work. As I look back over my life, I see specific points where I decided to go the eagle route rather than the prairie chicken route. I also see where I have stayed earthbound, going the prairie chicken route.

Most of my ministry life has been lived "in over my head." I'm richer for it. It forced me to pray a lot, to confess fears, to worry a good bit; but God always came through for me. (What do you mean it doesn't pay to worry? Most of the things I worry about never happen!) I live with the philosophy of not going to Jesus to tell Him how big my challenges are, but going to my challenges and telling them how big my Jesus is! For me, that is living by faith and really believing what God has promised me.

Are you bored with the maintenance of the system; yawning through a rehash of the same old stuff? Are you restless to pioneer a new path? Let me encourage you to join the mavericks who don't color inside the lines, play by the rules or remain in the box. Be an eagle for Jesus! Try something you have dreamed about doing for years, but been too

reticent to begin. Why not NOW ? Why not YOU?

“There’s no thrill in easy sailing,
When the sky is clear and blue.
There’s no joy in merely doing
Things which anyone can do.
But there is some fulfillment
That is mighty sweet to taste,
When you reach a destination,
You thought you couldn’t make”

Source unknown to me

Here are a few probing questions that I am asking myself as I look forward to next year.
Consider joining me in some thoughtful self-analysis?

1. In what ways have I been a prairie chicken the last year or so? What fears, have kept me earth-bound instead of soaring in the heavens for Jesus?
2. Why, in certain areas of my life, do I consistently choose to live the life of a prairie chicken, missing out on my true God-given potential
3. What kind(s) of eagle-dreams would Jesus have me attempt during 2007?

I close with Luke 19:26, The Message:

“Risk your life and get more than you ever dreamed of. Play it safe and end up holding the bag.”